

## **If an Event Caused by Crime Plunged a Community, School or Organization in Your County into Crisis, Help is Available through the Keystone Crisis Intervention Team or “KCIT”.**

As we hear the news each day we are faced with stories of traumatic events caused by crime --- domestic violence homicides, armed robberies, arson fires and mass shootings. These events rarely affect a single person, but ripple out into the broader community, causing shock and effects similar to paralysis on a wide scale. It is human nature to want to believe that such terrible things happen in *other communities*. The reality is that they can happen anywhere to anyone.

Over the last 15 years, Pennsylvania has been touched by several incidents of mass violence. Some, like the downing of Flight 97 in Somerset County by hijackers on September 11, 2001, the Nickel Mines Amish School Shootings in 2006, and most recently, the April 2014 knife attacks at a Westmoreland County High School attracted national and international attention. Many other violent incidents occurred in our Commonwealth during this time period that did not make the headlines. Regardless of whether anyone was watching, there was a group of trained, dedicated and seasoned professionals quietly responding to these communities traumatized by crime --- the Keystone Crisis Intervention Team (KCIT).

### **Small Investment with a Large Dividend**

Since 1999, PCCD has been investing a small portion of its annual federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) statewide funding allocation to build the Commonwealth’s capacity to respond to terrorist events and other criminal incidents that produce multiple victims. Over time, this small investment has paid large dividends as a formalized crisis response team structure evolved. This formalized structure, known as the Keystone Crisis Response Team or “KCIT” empowers local communities to support crime victims in their recovery from traumatic incidents by assessing the impact of the event on the community; developing an intervention plan; and providing crisis intervention by trained volunteer teams.

Currently, KCIT has over 100 members, all of whom have completed extensive training on crisis response as it relates to criminal victimization. Team members must participate in simulation exercises to keep their skills current as well as attend advanced training courses. KCIT members come from many different professions including victim services, probation and parole, juvenile justice, clergy, child welfare, education and mental health. This diversity among membership brings an array of skills and experience to the team.

### **How can KCIT Help?**

Many times, the crisis responders in the local community are themselves overwhelmed by the trauma of the event. That is where KCIT can be most helpful. Inviting crisis responders from outside of the community to provide short term intervention provides an opportunity to offer information and suggestions on how to prepare to respond to the community’s distress.

The services offered by KCIT include helping local decision makers to identify the groups in their community most at risk of experiencing trauma, leading one or more group crisis intervention sessions to help victims begin to talk about their reactions to the trauma and begin to cope, and provide trainings on trauma response and associated topics to community caregivers to assist them in meeting ongoing

community needs. While KCIT does not charge a fee for its crisis response services, it gratefully accepts donations.

Training, technical assistance and collaboration are other critical aspects of KCITs crisis response efforts. Members of the team network with crisis responders in the emergency management, critical incident stress management, and mental health and substance abuse professions to ensure that information is shared and appropriate linkages occur. KCIT is available to provide technical assistance to local communities as they work to develop their own crisis response plans. Finally, KCIT offers a variety of customized trainings on crisis response for a variety of audiences.

To learn more about the team and the services that it provides and how to access them, visit the KCIT website at [www.kcitpa.org](http://www.kcitpa.org) or contact Ms. Michelle Kern, KCIT Coordinator at [michelle@novabucks.org](mailto:michelle@novabucks.org).